





# INVASION OF HARPER'S FERRY.

## SPEECH

OF

# HON. BENJAMIN F. WADE, OF OHIO.

Delivered in the United States Senate, December 14, 1859.

The Senate resumed the consideration of the following resolution, submitted by Mr. MASON on the 5th of December:

*Resolved*, That a committee be appointed to inquire into the facts attending the late invasion and seizure of the armory and arsenal of the United States at Harper's Ferry, in Virginia, by a band of armed men, and report whether the same was attended by armed resistance to the authorities and public force of the United States, and by the murder of any of the citizens of Virginia, or of any troops sent there to protect the public property; whether such invasion and seizure was made under color of any organization intended to subvert the Government of any of the States of the Union; what was the character and extent of such organization; and whether any citizens of the United States, not present, were implicated therein or accessory thereto, by contributions of money, arms, munitions, or otherwise; what was the character and extent of the military equipment in the hands or under the control of said armed band, and where and how and when the same was obtained and transported to the place so invaded. And that said committee report whether any and what legislation may, in their opinion, be necessary, on the part of the United States, for the future preservation of the peace of the country, or for the safety of the public property; and that said committee have power to send for persons and papers.

The pending question was on the following amendment, offered by Mr. TRUMBULL:

After the word "invaded," near the end of the resolution, insert:

And that said committee also inquire into the facts attending the invasion, seizure, and robbery, in December, 1859, of the arsenal of the United States, at Liberty, in the State of Missouri, by a mob or body of armed men, and report whether such seizure and robbery was attended by resistance to the authorities of the United States, and followed by an invasion of the Territory of Kansas, and the plunder and murder of any of its inhabitants, or of any citizen of the United States, by the persons who thus seized the arms and ammunition of the Government, or others combined with them, whether said seizure and robbery of the arsenal were made under color of any organization intended to subvert the Government of any of the States or Territories of the Union; what was the character and extent of such organization, and whether any citizens of the United States, not present, were implicated therein, or accessory thereto, by contributions of money, arms, ammunition, or otherwise; what was the character and extent of the military equipments in the hands or under the control of said mob, and how and when and where the same were subsequently used by said mob; what was the value of the arms and ammunition of every description so taken from the said arsenal by the mob; whether the same or any part thereof have been returned, and the value of such as were lost; whether Captain

Luther Leonard, the United States officer in command of the arsenal, communicated the facts in relation to its seizure and robbery to his superior officer, and what measures, if any, were taken in reference thereto.

Mr. WADE. It was not my intention, Mr. President, to say anything upon the subject of this resolution until late yesterday, when my name was called in question by one or two of the Senators on this floor. I made up my mind, on the introduction of this resolution, that I would vote for it; not, however, with the hope that any beneficial result would flow from it, for it seemed to me from the first that the only effect it would have would be to increase that state of excitement that seems already to be sufficiently strong, at least for all practical purposes. But upon this resolution the whole subject of controversy between the Northern and Southern States has been discussed, and I have been alluded to in such terms as renders it essential that I should say something. I have no desire to speak frequently on this most hackneyed subject.

It was said by the mover of this resolution, that one great object of it was to elicit the state of Northern feeling with regard to the recent invasion at Harper's Ferry.

Mr. MASON. Will the Senator indulge me a moment?

The VICE PRESIDENT. Does the Senator from Ohio yield to the Senator from Virginia?

Mr. WADE. Certainly.

Mr. MASON. That has been ascribed to me once or twice in the course of the debate, perhaps upon both sides of the Chamber. It was a misapprehension. I did not say, or mean to say, that any object of the resolution was to elicit the state of Northern feeling in reference to the occurrence at Harper's Ferry. My colleague may have said something of that sort. What I did say, and what I design and hope to ascertain by the investigation, is to find out from what source the funds and the counsel were obtained that led to or induced that incursion at Harper's Ferry.

I had reason to believe, and I have reason to believe, that it came chiefly from the New England States.

Mr. WADE. Mr. President, I stand corrected in that particular, although I got the impression that it was a part, and an essential part, of the design of the mover of the resolution, to inquire into the state of Northern feeling on that subject. It seems I was mistaken. I believe the colleague of the Senator from Virginia avowed that to be the principal object of the resolution. I had supposed that it could not be very essential to introduce a resolution for the purpose of ascertaining what public sentiment at the North was on the subject of this invasion of Harper's Ferry from any source whatever. I know very well, that for the basest political purposes, that great and overshadowing party to which I belong has been charged with complicity in this affair; but we have treated the accusation with scorn and contempt. We, who have not before been charged with any crime whatever, we who have maintained peace and good order, are all at once charged, in general terms, through some of the papers of the North and the papers of the South, with being parties to treason, murder, and stirring up insurrection! The charge is so entirely overstrained, that I must say it fell upon my ears without creating one single emotion. I care nothing about a charge of that kind, made in such general and sweeping terms.

But, Mr. President, I know what the effect of it may be in that part of the country where there is an acute jealousy existing as to the motives of Northern men. The charge is made through the only papers that can reach the ears of the Southern people, and where no antidote will be suffered to go, in order to explain public opinion. It seems to me that the Southern people are misguided upon this subject; that they entertain the idea that Northern men, in considerable numbers, respectable men, are concerned in some deliberate conspiracy against their rights. Now, sir, I must say, that if such a state of feeling does really exist there, the Southern people themselves are principally responsible for it. They will suffer no opinions to be circulated among them, unless they are first cut and trimmed to their own prejudices. If a Northern man goes down there and honestly avows his opinions, he is in peril of his life; he is turned out of any Southern State; his sentiments, however honest, and his motives, however noble, will not exculpate him from the charge of being an Abolitionist, or something of that kind, and he will be hurled out of your States; and you, who speak of the observance of constitutional rights, will you stand by him there when he invokes the Constitution of the United States to shield him against your unwarrantable prejudices? Not at all, sir. You will no more suffer a Northern man to circulate among you, unless he leaves his manhood and his independence behind him, than the Chinese would suffer a stranger to invade their cities. You will not suffer the papers of a great and all-prevailing party in the North to circulate among you, so that you may learn the designs

of the party through that source which carries its intelligence to the party in the North.

Then, sir, can you but be deluded? I should suppose if there was any danger of circulating incendiary matter among the people of the South, that would be the most dangerous of all which went to teach the people there that a great party, controlling all the free States, were sympathizing with raids upon the South—were ready to lend themselves to any uprising that might be got up there. If I were to judge of dangerous incendiarism, I should say that would be the most dangerous of all; yet it is carried into those States, without, as I said before, any antidote, or anything to explain it. The Governors of your States may proclaim that the great mass of the Northern people are ready to abet the acts of those who recently made an attack on Harper's Ferry. What could be more dangerous to the institutions of any Southern State than statements like this, if promulgated there?

Why, sir, it is a strange state of things that we find prevailing all around us. A strange state of sentiment has sprung up all at once. I beg to know what has taken place that has given rise to this inquiry and—I will say it—to these most intemperate speeches that have been made on the subject. Why, sir, twenty-one men, all told, deluded men—yea, sir, judging from the very act they undertook to accomplish, insane men—have invaded a great and powerful sovereign State, and they have met that retribution which every sane man knew must be their lot in undertaking what they did. When a gang of conspirators are apprehended and brought to justice in every other case, as far as I know, all excitement ceases over the graves of the malefactors; and why not here?

Mr. President, I understand it is said that the Northern people sympathize with John Brown in the raid that he made upon the sovereignty of Virginia; and that is a great cause of complaint. Sir, I do not stand here to control the sympathies of the human heart, under any circumstances; because they are not subject to human control; but I think I can explain the reason why many Northern men have deeply sympathized with John Brown, the leader of this gang. I ask you here, however, always to discriminate between the man and the act that he committed. Gentlemen seem incapable of drawing that line of discrimination. They run both together, and they treat John Brown as a common malefactor. They have a right to treat him so; but he will not go down to posterity in that light at all. I think I know why it is that some considerable feeling and sympathy exist in the North for him, and it cannot be understood unless we go back for four years, and see what was taking place in a distant Territory of the United States, and what part John Brown acted on that theatre.

Sir, if the people of Virginia are excited almost to madness because a conspiracy has been formed and an attempt made upon their sovereignty, what do you suppose were the feelings of Northern men, whose relations and friends had gone into a far-distant Territory, and formed colonies there, weak and feeble, scattered through a wil-

derness; when it was the deliberate purpose of a great, powerful, and almost all-pervading party, to drive them out, or to coerce them to subscribe to opinions and institutions which they abhorred from the bottom of their souls? Many were murdered in cold blood, and others were driven out and their property destroyed. They appealed to Congress; but they got insult instead of sympathy. When I state this, I state what I know. My blood boiled then, in view of the oppression and tyranny that sacrificed that Territory. I need not go through all the volume of testimony on that subject. I speak by the book. One hundred witnesses attest the truth of every word I say. Their record is indelible. It will go down to posterity, and it will show the damning fact that this Government did, at least, connive at the acts of great bands of conspirators, who, arming themselves lawlessly with arms of the Federal Government, invaded a peaceable Territory; took possession of the ballot-boxes; drove its people from the polls; expelled them from their possessions; exercised acts of tyranny over them; deprived them of every right; and, in a great many instances, murdered them ruthlessly in cold blood.

But, sir, that was a great way off; it was in a Territory of this Union. It was not every man on this floor who had friends there exposed to those attacks, and hence they did not create the same excitement that is created when the invasion comes nearer home. But I declare here in my place that, in my judgment, the only difference between the two cases is this: that in the case of Kansas the invasion was made with no other purpose than to fix Slavery there at all hazards and by force of arms; while John Brown and his men, with a like unlawful purpose, undertook to extirpate Slavery from the State of Virginia.

The Free-State men of Kansas got no consolation from this Government. I remember well when their petitions came in here, asking for redress, and I remember that a Senator stood forth in his place and said: "We will subdue you; you are traitors; we will hang every man of you; this Government has proved itself the strongest Government under heaven to protect the civil rights of men, and now I want to see how strong it is to punish traitors." That was the language dealt out to the citizens of that Territory when they appealed to us for redress. Understand me, sir; I do not go back to the history of Kansas for the purpose of justifying John Brown and his crew in their invasion of Virginia, but in order to show you why it is that the men of the free States, to some considerable extent, do sympathize with this old hero. In the darkest hour of Kansas, when the rights of the Free-State men were imperilled, when their men were murdered in cold blood, (several of whom were from the State of Ohio,) when everything looked dark and gloomy there, and when your Government failed to interpose its strong arm in their behalf, then it was that John Brown appeared upon the stage of action. Arming himself as well as he might, he commenced to do that justice to himself and his fellows that the Government had denied, and

he did it with a heroism and a determination that then not only challenged the admiration of his friends, but even the respect of his enemies. He went forward with a firmness and determination that carried terror into the hearts of the Border Ruffians, and he hurled them from the Territory, and really conquered a peace.

Now, sir, in order to understand Northern sentiment, it is necessary fully to appreciate the feelings of those men whose friends were stricken down in that defenceless Territory. John Brown was their champion. He carried himself through those scenes nobly, to the acceptance of all and the admiration of all; and there it was, as has been often said here, that he learned the art of war. Undoubtedly, sir, that raid was the parent of this. It is true, John Brown lost two of his sons there; they were murdered in cold blood before his eyes, literally hewed to pieces; and I believe that he was maddened by the scenes through which he passed in Kansas, because I do not believe that any sane man on earth would have undertaken the enterprise that he undertook at Harper's Ferry.

Well, sir, he marched upon Harper's Ferry; he conspired against a great sovereign State, to overthrow its institutions; and I say to the Senate—though I shall get no more credit for it than my fellow Senators who have preceded me have—that I do not sympathize with or approve the act. John Brown resided, for a long time, not a great way from that portion of the country from which I come. He was always reputed among the most honest and upright men in that community. There was nothing against his character. He was known to be a brave, generous, disinterested man, the admiration of all that knew him, even before he passed through those scenes in Kansas. He proceeded upon this lawless mission, and I suppose the idea entered his head while he was in Kansas; indeed, I saw it stated in the papers that there it was that he found his associates; there it was that he conceived the idea of invading the Southern States, and emancipating their slaves. From there, he went to Canada, and in Canada he made that famous Constitution, or form of Government, which, in his crazy mind, he conceived was to supersede all others. But, Mr. President, [Mr. Mason in the chair,] you must bear me witness that he bore himself, among the disastrous scenes of this unwarrantable enterprise, with that same calmness, with that same sublime heroism and indifference to fate, that had characterized the man on all other occasions. I have heard even those whose territory he invaded speak of him as a man who challenged their admiration for his personal qualities, though they had, of course, no sympathy with the act that he had perpetrated. The Governor of your State, sir, who met him face to face in an interview, was compelled to say, "He is brave, he is honest, he is sincere." It is rarely that a man, brave, honest, and sincere, is led to the gallows or the stake; but nevertheless, if these qualities misguide him into a lawless raid upon the rights of others, he must suffer the penalties of the law, and no man stands here to justify him.

I ask you in the generosity of your hearts to separate and distinguish between approval of a lawless invasion, and sympathy for a sublime hero, taking his life in his hand, and marching up to the altar to offer it there a sacrifice to his highest convictions of right. Sir, his course was disinterested. He is frequently spoken of as a common malefactor, a vulgar murderer, a robber. Sir, he proposed nothing to himself. His conduct was as disinterested as man's conduct can ever be; but he was misguided, he was demented, he was insane; still the people of the North do not forget the great services that he rendered to their cause, to their relations, and their friends, who were in peril in the Territory of Kansas, nor can the human heart divest itself of a sense of that heroism which has characterized him from the time that he was overtaken until the grave closed over him.

Therefore, sir, they did sympathize with him; but I beg of you not to be misled by this. Do not jump to the conclusion that the people who hold meetings in admiration of the personal qualities of John Brown, one single man of them, stand forth to justify his nefarious and unwarrantable act. I do not know that a single application to save his life was made from that quarter. If it was, I did not hear of it. They supposed that, according to the law existing in the State against which he had offended, he properly suffered the extreme penalty of the law. And here I will say, before I pass from this branch of the subject, that in my intercourse with all the people who knew John Brown, in my intercourse with all the men who have sympathized with him in his last trial, I have never yet heard of a man, woman, or child, that stood forth as a justifier of his raid upon Virginia. If the people sympathized with a felon upon the gallows, anybody would know without inquiry that it was no ordinary case. Our people do not sympathize with crime, but they do feel those emotions which are elicited by those traits of heroism that characterized this leader during the whole course of his life, and shone most conspicuously in his death.

But enough of that, Mr. President. It is exceedingly absurd to endeavor to implicate the Republican party in the acts of John Brown or anybody else. They have their principles, which are well known. Our doctrines are well understood. The limitations upon our doctrines are well known by all who choose to know them, and those who do not would never understand them, although they were written upon the face of the sun. The Senator from Tennessee, [Mr. JOHNSON,] the other day, and the Senator from Alabama, [Mr. CLAY,] yesterday, if I understood them, undertook to read us a lecture on our understanding of the Declaration of Independence, and the doctrines growing out of that instrument; and I have thought that probably here is the great departure between them and myself, between those who believe in the institution of Slavery and those who do not. The Republican party, so far as I know, believe in the Declaration of Independence. They do not believe that it is a tissue of glittering generalities.

They do not believe that it is a mere jingle of words, having no meaning. They do believe that every man bearing the human form has received from the Almighty Maker a right to his life, to his liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. They do not believe that this right is confined to men of any particular name, nation, or color; but they believe that wherever there is humanity, there is this great principle.

The Senator from Tennessee said that the Declaration of Independence applied only to white men; that white men have a right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and he said it did not apply to all; that it was never intended to apply to any other class of persons than the white race. Do I understand that Senator, then, in the converse of the proposition, to hold that the black man has no right to his life? Let us narrow it down to that; will the Senator say that a negro has no right to life? If he has, he has just as great and as inalienable a right to his liberty and to the pursuit of happiness. Sir, there is nothing more abhorrent to the mind of most Northern men than the idea that one man was created by his Maker to be a mere drudge, a serf, to another; that it was the intention of the Almighty, in creating a particular class of men, that they should forego their own happiness, their own right to cultivate their faculties, and that they were born for no better purpose than to minister to the happiness of some other man, regardless of their own. To a man thus born, his being would be a curse. He might scoff at the Creator who had raised him up, not to regard his own happiness, not to regard the culture of his own mind, but as a being whose life, whose limbs, and all whose faculties, were dedicated by the Almighty to minister alone to the promotion of some other man's happiness. Sir, that is not the teaching of the Declaration of Independence. It was never so intended, nor are the framers of that instrument liable to be taunted with hypocrisy because they did not carry out practically, to their full extent, the ideas of that great and Godlike instrument. They were framing a Government for these States. They knew, to be sure, that the sovereign States of this Union existing at the time had their own institutions; they knew, to be sure, that Slavery prevailed there; but there was not a man of them who did not proclaim it to be wrong. I am not going to read those declarations of theirs, but I say to you, you cannot find the man that was instrumental in framing the Constitution of the United States, or the Declaration of Independence, but what said over and over again that the system of Slavery, wherever it exists, is wrong, and cannot be justified upon any principle; and to attempt to justify it, would be to reduce the Government of these United States down to a level with the meanest despotism that exists on the face of God's earth. If one may be created for no better purpose than to minister to the welfare of another, the only question will be, who are the privileged classes—who are to be ministered unto, and who are the menials to do their work? All monarchies act upon this principle, and therefore it is that kings assume to reign by di-

vine right. It was the purpose of our fathers to put the dagger to the heart of such an absurdity. All men, say they, are created equal, and have these inalienable rights. All men feel that that is so.

Why, sir, what said Jefferson? The Senator from Tennessee, I believe, said, that if he gave this scope to the Declaration of Independence, inasmuch as he was a slaveholder himself, he would be a hypocrite in saying it. That does not follow. The Senator from Alabama, if I understood him, declared that if this was so, then those who held slaves were great criminals, and were guilty of the greatest wrong. That does not follow, by any means.

Mr. CLAY. The Senator doubtless does not mean to misrepresent me. I said that if the libel, as I think it, pronounced by his party upon the slaveholders, was true, then we were criminals.

Mr. WADE. I do not know that I understand the Senator.

Mr. CLAY. I said that if the assertion of your party, that Slavery and Polygamy stood together, and were equally crimes against revealed religion, was true, then both the slaveholder and the polygamist were criminals alike.

Mr. WADE. Mr. President, I am not one of those who suppose that all slaveholders are deeply criminal. I know very well how habit and custom, and even necessity, modify all our abstract opinions. I understand that well, and I never mention it in the North without the proper qualifications, notwithstanding the Senator thinks I hate slaveholding and slaveholders so much. I give you here, on this floor, my worst version of your institutions. I hold no such doctrine as the Senator charges us with. I do not charge Thomas Jefferson, nor Mr. Madison, nor General Washington, nor Mr. Randolph, nor Mr. Tucker, nor any other of the great statesmen to whom we look up with such reverence, with hypocrisy, or anything sinister or wrong; because, when they made this declaration, and declared that the word "slave" should not be in the instrument which they were framing, for the reason that it grated harshly on their ears, and they knew it was an infringement on natural right, they held slaves in the States themselves. The fact that they held slaves did not prevent their making this declaration, nor did it prevent them, on all occasions, from inveighing against the institution, and wishing they could find some means by which they could do away with it. General Washington himself was, according to your understanding of it, just as much an Abolitionist as you charge me with being. He believed the system wrong—morally, politically, in every way—and he hoped some means would be found whereby it might be abolished. Yes, sir, that was the word. He wished that some means would be found by which this system should be done away with, and he declared that, whenever there was an opportunity, his vote should not be wanting to accomplish it. How long do you suppose that he could remain on the soil of Virginia to-day, with this declaration upon his tongue?

In the administration of public affairs, you cannot govern a nation upon an abstraction. You cannot impeach a man with inconsistency because he cannot live in the administration of public affairs up to the finest-spun theory that you may produce. All I ask of these great men they performed. They found themselves surrounded with this institution; they saw its working and its operation; they saw that it was all wrong, in policy and in theory; they saw that in morals it was equally wrong, and they wished to get rid of it; and on all proper occasions they constantly declared it to be a wrong, and they invoked the people about them to come up to the work, and, as fast as it could be done, to do away with it. Therefore, sir, they were consistent. They knew that their slaveholding in the States was in direct contradiction of that great and Godlike declaration that they had put forth to all mankind, and they sought to get rid of it.

Mr. President, it is not a great while ago since the view that those great men entertained on this subject was universal, North, South, East, and West. I wish Senators would bear that in mind; because, perhaps, it would moderate their asperity of feeling against those who still stand where, but a very short time since, we all stood together. That Slavery is to be justified as a divine institution, is a doctrine that is not five years old, in my judgment. Mr. Clay, at the head of the old Whig party, denounced it down to a very late period in his valuable life, in stronger, infinitely stronger terms than I could denounce it upon this floor, as wrong, continually wrong; and the great party that adhered to his standard in the South were all equally orthodox upon this subject; there was no discordant note there; there was not a Clay Whig in all the South who would stand up and say, "this institution of ours is to be justified upon principles of moral right and justice;" not one.

So well known was this fact, that I remember it is not much more than four years ago since the speakers in the South, and the leading papers in the South, put forth that doctrine—the *Charleston Mercury*, I recollect, was one—that the farmers of our institutions were all Abolitionists, agreeing precisely with our doctrines, (and it cannot be denied, because the record evidence that they left behind them is perfectly overwhelming,) but that they did not understand the subject; they had not made it their study particularly; but now the South have reviewed the whole doctrine, and have come to another conclusion. They now find that the old doctrine was altogether at fault; that the relation of master and slave is the true relation of man, upheld by divine inspiration, instituted of God, and approved of and in accordance with nature itself. The *Charleston Mercury* went so far as to say that if this was not so, the Abolitionists were right. Yes, sir; it staked everything upon the new light that had broken in in modern times, which shines so fiercely that it has dimmed and obliterated even the Sermon upon the Mount.

Yes, sir; this is a modern light that has sprung

up since you began to raise the standard of Slavery, declaring that it should dominate over this great nation, and should prostrate every other interest. It grew up along with your new Territorial doctrines; it grew up along with your Dred Scott decision; it grew up with your meditated design of opening the African slave trade. It is a key to them all. It grew as cotton grows; and we were told here not long since that cotton was king, and had dictated this new code of morals. I challenge any Senator to deny that I state this doctrine aright.

Is it not a fact that you claim that on a review of the question of Slavery you have got new light? The old doctrine was, that it was wrong in morals, and could not be justified; but now you hold the contrary. We, sir, adhere to the old doctrine. We have not seen the new light that has broken in upon the South. We were not admitted into the great council where the investigation was had, which resulted in finding out that the institution of Slavery is in accordance with nature and approved by God.

It is true, sir, that I cannot touch the institution within the boundaries of the States where Slavery is established by law, for there the Constitution does not enable me to reach it. I am no more responsible for it in your States than I am for it in Turkey or any other foreign country, where I hear of it with regret, and where I have nothing to say upon the subject; but when you undertake to thrust it forth where it has no foothold, where there is no necessity that it should go, there, like Mr. Clay, of Kentucky, I meet you to contend inch by inch; nay, with him in the last noble sentiment that he uttered, I would suffer my arm to fall from its socket before, with my consent, this accursed institution should invade one inch of territory now free.

One word more as to the effect of this doctrine. Do I stand here to accuse a gentleman who is a slaveholder of the South with crime? I have never done so. You may say, that if we regard Slavery as wrong, and as a robbery of the rights of men, we should accuse you with being criminal. Well, sir, the logic would seem to be good enough, were it not modified by the fact that with you it is deemed a necessity. I do not know what you can do with it; I was almost about to say that I do not care what you do with it; I will say, it is none of my business what you do with it, and I never undertake to interfere with it. To be sure, believing it to be wrong—wrong to yourselves, and wrong to those whom you hold in this abject condition—I wish that you could see the light as I see it; but if you do not, it is a matter of your own concern, and not of mine. I can very well have charity towards you, because, with all my opposition to your institution, I can hardly doubt that if we had changed places, and my lot had been cast among you, under like circumstances, my opinions on this subject might be different, and I might be here, perhaps, as fierce a fire-eater as I am now defending against fire. I can understand these things, and I accuse no man.

There is one thing more which I will notice in passing. The Senator from Georgia [Mr. IVER-

SON] saw fit, in his place in the Senate, to assail my colleague in the House of Representatives, (Mr. SHERMAN,) and to impeach him because of a transaction which he characterized as exceedingly dishonorable, and which he thought should go to destroy that confidence that is reposed in one so situated. When I heard his denunciations, I was happy to find that the Senator did not accuse Mr. SHERMAN of any erroneous vote, or of any wrong action. Mr. SHERMAN's course, in the other branch of Congress, has been known of all men for some four years past. He has been a very active and a very worthy member; and if there was anything wrong in any principle that he has advocated or any vote that he has given, I am sure that the vigilance of that astute Senator would have found it out. I say, then, I was exceedingly gratified to find that my friend in the other House was so little assailable upon this floor, or anywhere else. We consider him as one of the brightest ornaments of the State of Ohio. That great State seeks to do him honor, and I rejoice to know that the great party to which I belong repose in him the utmost confidence. They have found nothing in him but what they approve; and the Senator, after all his investigations, could find nothing more than this: that Mr. SHERMAN had recommended the circulation of a certain book. Now, I want to ask the Senator if there is anything in that book that he thinks dangerous to the people of any section of this country? I want to know from that Senator if he believes that that book cannot safely be intrusted to the hands of any freeman in this Government? The Senator does not choose to answer me.

Mr. IVERSON. Mr. President, I do not choose to stultify myself by answering any such question as that. It is too apparent to any man of common sense who has read the book, what would be the effect if its recommendations were carried out.

Mr. WADE. Well, sir, since the question has been up, I have taken some pains to look through that book, and I find nothing there but arguments addressed by a non-slaveholder of a slaveholding State to his fellow non-slaveholders in those States, laying down rules and regulations for their proceedings, and arguing this great question of Slavery as it affects the interests of non-slaveholders in the slaveholding States. Unless such arguments are unlawful there, I see nothing in the book but what is proper for the consideration of all men who take an interest in these matters. Why, sir, has it come to this, in free America, that there must be a censorship of the press instituted—that a man cannot give currency to a book containing arguments that he thinks essentially affect the rights of whole classes of the free population of this nation? I hope not, and I believe not.

Why, sir, the great body of the statistical information in that book, as I read it, is drawn from the census of the United States, from your public documents, and from the archives of the nation. Is it improper that arguments deduced from these sources should be addressed to the free population of this country anywhere? If they



may not be, it is the hardest argument against this institution that I have seen yet. If we really have among us an institution that we are cherishing and seeking to spread broadcast over the land, so delicate in its texture that the free people cannot have information that they themselves claim, I say again, it is fraught with an inference more fatal to that institution than any I have heard of yet.

Mr. President, I have pursued this subject much further than I intended when I arose. I have heard the muttering thunder of disunion greeting my ears through all the Southern hemisphere. All your principal papers have already fixed upon a contingency when this Union shall end. In some of the Southern States, if I read aright, proceedings are pending now, having for their object an overturning of this Government, and the erection upon its ruins of a Southern Confederacy; and this idea is brought into the Halls of Congress, and we are compelled to listen by the hour to speeches filled with denunciations of our party, telling us that the Union is to be dissolved if the people elect as President an honorable man, of a great predominant party, holding to principles precisely such as the old fathers of the Government held. The Republican platform is nothing more nor less than the old Republican platform, marking the landmarks of the Government as laid down by them; we claim no more; we claim to live up to those doctrines; we claim not to harm the hair of the head of any section of this Union; and yet we are to be told by the hour that if we succeed in wresting this Government from your hands, and placing a constitutional man in that great office, according to the forms of the Constitution, you will nevertheless make this a contingency on which you will disrupt and destroy the Government.

I say to gentlemen on the other side, these are very harsh doctrines to preach in our ears. What, sir, are you going to play this game with us? Will you go into the election with us, with a settled purpose and design, that if you win you will take all the honors and the emoluments and offices of the Government into your own clutches; but if we win, you will break up the establishment and turn your backs on us? Is that the fair dealing to which we are invited? I am happy to know that you propose to make that contingency turn upon an event that will make it impossible to be consummated. The Government, to-day, is all in your hands; it has been in your hands for years; you are partaking of all its emoluments, all its measures you have moulded, and you have designated the men who receive its honors. Year after year you have done this, and men have come here from the free States, men holding our opinions; we have sat here patiently, but we have been deprived of all the honors and emoluments that flow from this Government, as though we were its enemies; but did we ever complain? Not at all. We did not expect that we should share any of those favors, unless it should be so that our glorious principles should commend themselves to a majority of the people of these United States.

But, sir, if it should turn out so—and Heaven only knows whether it will or not—I give gentlemen now to understand, this Union will not easily be disrupted. Gentlemen talk about it in a very business-like way, as though it were a magazine to be blown up whenever you touch the fire to it; as if, on a given day, at a moment's warning, at your own election, at any time and in any event, you can dissolve the bonds of this great Union. Do you not know, sir, that this great fabric has been more than eighty years in building, and do you believe you can destroy it in a day? I tell you, nay.

Sir, when you talk so coolly about dissolving this Union, do you know the difficulties through which you will have to wade before that end can be consummated? Have you reflected that between the North and the South there are no mountain ranges that are impassable, and no desert wastes which commonly divide great nations one from another? Do you not know that, whether we love one another or not, we are from the same stock, speaking the same language; and although institutions have made considerable difference between us, the great Anglo-Saxon type pervades the whole. We are bound together by great navigable rivers, interlacing and linking together all the States of this Union. Innumerable railroads also connect us, and an immense amount of commerce binds all the parts, besides domestic relations in a thousand ways. And do you believe that you can rend all this asunder without a struggle? I tell you, sir, you will search history in vain for a precedent; there has been no such Government as this that was ever rent asunder by any internal commotion. I know that Poland was broken up and divided, but it was by external force. We are found in the same ship; we are married forever, for better or for worse. We may make our condition very uncomfortable by bickerings if we will, but nevertheless there can be no divorcement between us. There is no way by which either one section or the other can get out of the Union. I do not say whether it is desirable or not. There is no way by which it can be effected, but least of all on the contingency that you have spoken of. I tell the Senator from Georgia, if you wait until a Republican President is elected, you will wait a day too late. Why not do it now, when, I say again, you have the Government in your own hands? Why tell us that it is to be done when our candidate is elected? I say to you, Mr. President, he would be but a sorry Republican who, elected by a majority of the votes of the American people, and consequently backed by them, should fail to vindicate his right to the Presidential chair. He will do it.

No man at the North is to be intimidated by these threats of dissolution that are thrown into our teeth daily, and I ask Senators on the other side, why do you do it? I know not what motive you can have in preaching the dissolution of this Union day by day. If you are going to do it, is it necessary to give us notice of it? There is no law requiring that you should serve notice on us that you are going to dissolve the Union; [laughter:] and I should think it would be bet-

ter to do it at once, and to do it without alarming our vigilance. It grates harshly on my ears; and I say to gentlemen, that if a Republican President shall be constitutionally elected to preside for the next four years over this people, my word for it, preside he will. Do not Senators know that an attempt to dissolve this Union implies civil war, with all its attendant horrors; the marching and countermarching of vast armies; battles to be fought, and oceans of blood to be spilled, with all the vindictive malice and ill will that civil war never fails to bring? And do gentlemen believe the wild tumult of such a struggle peculiarly favorable to the growth and perpetuity of this *delicate* institution? Why, sir, if it cannot stand the mild arguments of Helper's book, how can it abide the ultimate shock of arms? But, Mr. President, such things shall

never be. The souls and bodies of traitors may dissolve on the 'gibbet, but this Union shall stand forever.

Mr. President, I have said all and more than I intended, and I regret that it has become necessary for me to say anything on account of what has been said on the other side. I regret that at this early period of the session we should get interlocked with this old controversy. I wish it might have been postponed. I shall vote for this resolution most cheerfully, and will give it the furthest and most extended sweep that you may desire, because it is my wish, if there is any misunderstanding with regard to the participants in this affair, that you should have the greatest latitude that you can desire to ferret them out, and make them known to the public.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

BUELL & BLANCHARD, PRINTERS.

1859.



